

# Cal-SOAP

## California Student Opportunity and Access Program

*Committed to Increasing the College-Going Rates of Low-Income and First-in-Family Students*

**Cal-SOAP, the California Student Opportunity and Access Program**, is a collaborative effort to increase access to education beyond high school by raising the achievement levels of students from low-income and disadvantaged families and providing information on college access and financial aid opportunities.

2009 marks Cal-SOAP's 31<sup>st</sup> year. The program was created by the California Legislature in 1978 and is administered by the California Student Aid Commission. Cal-SOAP projects apply each year to the Commission for continued state funding. Funding is made through reimbursement contracts and Cal-SOAP law requires that each allocation of state funds be matched by an equal or higher level of local resources. A 12-member legislatively mandated advisory committee assists the Commission in administering the program.

Here are some important facts about the program:

- **Cal-SOAP's strength is its partnerships representing all education segments:** 126 public school districts, from the largest in the state to small, rural districts, plus individual high schools; nine of the 10 general campuses of the University of California; 18 of the 23 campuses of the California State University; 42 of the state's 109 California Community Colleges; 16 of the 77 Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities members; and 53 community-based organizations.
- **Cal-SOAP is invested in communities across the state.** Cal-SOAP projects are currently in 16 regions: Central Coast (Santa Maria), Central Valley (San Joaquin), East Bay (Alameda, Oakland and Richmond), Greater Long Beach Region, Los Angeles, Merced County, North Coast (Eureka), North Valley (Marysville), Sacramento, San Diego/Imperial Counties, San Francisco, San Jose, Santa Barbara, Solano, South County Gilroy and South San Joaquin (Bakersfield). These 16 regions serve 25 counties.
- **Cal-SOAP is successful.** Some 72 percent of Cal-SOAP participants enrolled in a California public college or university after high school graduation in 2005 compared to the statewide rate of 48.2 percent. In addition, another 8.31 percent of Cal-SOAP participants enrolled in independent, career or out-of-state colleges.
- **Cal-SOAP makes smart financial sense.** Each year, Cal-SOAP projects are required by state law to match the state funds they receive at least one to one with cash or in-kind contributions, such as office space. By leveraging state funds, Cal-SOAP projects are able to double the state's annual investment. In 2006-07, these matching resources were more than \$12 million.
- **Cal-SOAP partners work together to deliver services in their communities and make the most of limited resources.** Cal-SOAP projects provide academic tutoring, peer mentoring, college and career advising, college access and admissions counseling, test preparation, college tours, financial aid workshops and grants for college.

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■ **Cal-SOAP reaches out to about 135,000 of the state's most disadvantaged middle school and high school students and families each year.** Cal-SOAP projects target students who would be the first in their families to attend college, those from low-income families, and those from schools or geographic regions with low college-going rates.

■ **Cal-SOAP projects share a common goal and are also unique because they serve the specific needs of students within their communities.**

– All Cal-SOAP projects support Cash for College workshops, either as regional coordinators or leading organizers, or resources for staffing the events.

– A number of Cal-SOAP projects provide tutoring in AVID classrooms. AVID, Advancement Via Individual Determination, prepares fourth through 12th graders for four-year college eligibility. Cal-SOAP and AVID work to close the achievement gap.

– A number of Cal-SOAP projects work with the federal GEAR-UP to identify eligible middle school students for education awards that they can use later for postsecondary education.

– A number of Cal-SOAP projects partner with federal TRIO educational opportunity outreach programs.

■ **Cal-SOAP helps undergraduate and graduate students pay for college.** A full one-third of each project's grant is set aside for the salaries of undergraduate and graduate students who provide academic advising and tutoring and college counseling. Approximately 500 college students statewide are employed by Cal-SOAP. The students are gaining professional development while they serve California students.

■ **Cal-SOAP provides grants for college.** Most Cal-SOAP projects offer grants for college or career training, thanks to generous funding by the College Access Foundation of California. Since November 2005, the Foundation has provided more than \$6 million in grants to Cal-SOAP organizations.



